1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

# Introduction

121 IN September, 1948, I was appointed to undertake anthropological research in Sarawak under the auspices of the Colonial Social Science Research Council. The Secretary of the Colonial Social Science Research Council laid down as follows the nature of my research work: "a study of a traditionally based, stable, Iban community based on shifting dry rice cultivation and not subject to undue land shortage . . . . as described in 'A Report on the Possibilities of a Social Economic Survey of Sarawak,' by Dr. E. R. Leach".[1]

114 I arrived in Sarawak in January, 1949, and remained in the Colony until June, 1951. For most of this period I was working among the Iban of the Baleh region of the Kapit District of the Third Division. Our base camp was at Rumah Nyala in Sungai Sut, but field research was carried on in many other parts of the Baleh region—particularly in the headwaters of the Mujong. Visits were also made to Iban communities of the lower, middle and upper Rejang, the Katibas and Ngemah (in the Third Division), and of the Saribas and Ulu Batang Ai (in the Second Division). In studying agriculture many months were spent living on Iban farms, and this report is based on intensive first-hand observation; all of my investigations were carried on in the Iban language.

144 The Iban (or Sea Dayaks) belong to an ethnic stock which Haddon has called
141 Proto-Malay. In brief, they are a brachycephalic people (average C. I. 83) of
142 short stature (average height 5ft. 2½ins.), with black, lank hair and cinnamon
197 coloured skin. Iban culture is basically proto-Malayan in type. Howell, our greatest authority on the Iban language, had no hesitation in classing it as "a dialect of the wide spreading Malay language." However, it is a dialect which has become intermixed with words borrowed from the various Borneo tribes with which the Iban have come into contact. Again, the Iban language, although it does contain a number of words that are Sanskrit in origin, has not been influenced by Arabic as have the languages of the peninsular Malays and the Menangkabau of Sumatra.

161 In Sarawak to-day, the Iban are the predominant element in a highly hetero-
162 geneous population. The total population of Sarawak as disclosed by the census of 1947 was 546,385, and of this number 190,326 (or 34·8%) were Iban. The past century has been for the Iban an era of expansion and they are now scattered over most of the interior zone of Sarawak—from the Samarahan river in the First Division to the Limbang river in the Fifth Division, about four hundred miles away to the north-east. However, the main concentrations of Iban population are to be found in the Second and Third Divisions.

211 Formerly, all of the Iban of Sarawak were shifting cultivators growing their
177 *padi* on hillside clearings in the tropical rain-forest. To-day, there are a number of Iban communities (particularly in the lower reaches of the Lupar, Saribas and Rejang rivers) who derive their livelihood from the cultivation of wet *padi* in

[1] Leach, E. R., "Social Science Research in Sarawak," Colonial Research Studies No. 1, London, 1950.

592 described as consisting of so many doors—10 doors, 20 doors, or whatever the number may be. This term has the advantage that it may be applied to any of the indigenous peoples of Borneo that live in long-houses, but in this report—which is exclusively concerned with the Iban—I propose to employ the term *bilek*. *Bilek* is the word which the Iban use to describe the separate, enclosed rooms of a long-house, but it is also a term used, by the Iban themselves, to refer to the family group which owns and occupies one apartment of a long-house, as, for example, in the phrase: "*Kami se bilek tabin magang*" ("We, a *bilek* family, are all ill"). The family group, described in the phrase: "*kami se bilek*" ("we, the members of a *bilek*"), is the basic unit of Iban social and economic organization. In the discussion that follows, I shall refer to this unit as *the bilek family*.

6. Although the Iban *bilek* family is essentially based on the elementary family, it is a unit which is primarily defined by the criterion of local residence. Its members—as a group—own and occupy one, and only one, of the separate family apartments of a long-house, each apartment consisting of a *bilek*, a *sadau*, a *ruai* and a *tanju*, as already described. The *bilek* family is also a domestic family; that is, its members constitute a single household. Food is prepared and cooked for the *bilek* family as a whole, and its members usually eat together, sharing a common meal. The *bilek* family is also an allodial unit, possessing both land and property in its own right. It is likewise an independent unit economically, cultivating its own *padi* and a wide variety of other crops. Ritually, each *bilek* family is a disparate unit with its own magical charms (*pengaroh*), its own set of ritual prohibitions or taboos (*pemali*), and its own special kind of sacred *padi* (*padi pun*). Among the Iban there are no clans or other large scale corporate kin groups, and so the *bilek* family is a social unit of primary and paramount importance.

592 7. The Iban *bilek* family has two dominant characteristics: it is a small group
162 numerically, and a simple one genealogically. The average size is about 5 or 6 members, and 75% of families fall within the range of from 3 to 7 members. For the three long-houses[1] Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, all of the Baleh region (Sketch Map 1), the arithmetical mean was 5·75 persons per *bilek* family—with a mean deviation of 1·8. This accords closely with other data available for the Baleh region. The most prevalent type of family group is that
596 containing three generations: that is, grandparents, parents and children; and all families are simple variants of this type.

591 8. Marriage among the Iban is *utrolocal*. By this term I mean to denote a system of marriage in which *either* uxorilocal *or* virilocal[2] residence may be followed, and in which rules of kinship and inheritance result in neither form of

[1]The quantitative data in the account of social organization that follows are based on a 'sample' consisting of three long-house communities: Rumah Nyala (25 *bilek* families) of Sungai Sut, Rumah Sibat (32 *bilek* families) of Sungai Melinau, and Rumah Tungku (50 *bilek* families) of Sungai Tiau; giving a total of 615 persons grouped into 107 *bilek* families. These three long-houses are discrete entities both territorially and socially, and although they were selected by non-random methods, they do constitute a representative 'sample' for an examination of the social organization of the Ulu Ai Iban of the Baleh region.

[2]The terms 'virilocal' and 'uxorilocal' have been used in preference to 'patrilocal' and 'matrilocal'. As Dr. Leonard Adam has pointed out ("Man," Vol. XLVIII, No. 13, 1948), there are etymological and logical objections to the terms 'patrilocal' and 'matrilocal,' and in the case of a society such as that of the Iban which lacks unilineal descent groups, the use of the terms 'patrilocal' and 'matrilocal' would be particularly misleading. Accordingly, I have used 'uxorilocal' to indicate that a married couple shares domicile with the *bilek* family of the wife, and 'virilocal' to indicate that a married couple shares domicile with the *bilek* family of the husband.

1 [The author apparently considers this to be a family type which is at variance
A with the OCM definition.-Analyst] 5

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within a *bilek*, partition always follows in due course. This precludes the development of joint or extended families, and nowhere in Sarawak did I encounter siblings—married and having adult children of their own—who were still living together as members of the same *bilek*. Again, my observations showed that partition always involves the break-up of a sibling group. When partition occurs one sibling and his (or her) family secedes from the ancestral *bilek* to found a new and independent household. Furthermore, this sibling is just as likely to be a man as a woman; thus, an analysis of 34 cases of partition showed that 17 founders of seceding families were males, while 17 were females. A fundamental feature of partition is that each part—after partition has occurred—is an autonomous unit in its own right, and not merely a constituent part of some wider corporate group. The partition of *bilek* families as it occurs in Iban society is thus a different process from segmentation as it occurs in societies based on unilineal principles.

13. In this brief introduction further analysis of the *bilek* family is unnecessary, for it is intended to do no more than adumbrate the social system upon which Iban agriculture is based. It is most important, however, to realize that the *bilek* family is the principal corporate group of Iban society and the fundamental unit in Iban economic organization.

*The Long-House Community*

14. *Bilek* families, as we have already seen, are grouped together in long-house communities. These communities vary in size from 4 to as many as 50 *bilek* families, the average size being about 14. Of a sample of 61 long-houses in the Baleh region[1]: (*a*) 25% contained fewer than 10 *bilek* families, (*b*) only 13% more than 20 *bilek* families, and (*c*) 62% consisted of from 10 to 20 *bilek* families.

15. All Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers or streams navigable by dug-out canoes, and throughout the Baleh region one encounters a long-house about once in every two or three miles. Sometimes long-houses may be found within hailing distance of one another, though this is a distinctly rare event. Nowhere in the Baleh are there clusters of houses such as occur among the Land Dayaks of the First Division, or the Iban of the Rejang Delta.[2] The universal rule is that each long-house constitutes a single community; in other words, among the Iban the village and the long-house coincide. Moreover, traditionally each long-house community is an autonomous entity, not subject to the control of any other group. Every long-house is situated on part of a specified tract of land, and between long-houses there are always recognized boundaries, consisting in the main of unambiguous natural features such as streams or ridges. Each long-house then, is the domicile of a compact and independent community of families, and is situated on the bank of a river that is part of a specified territory over which these various families have either rights of access or ownership.

16. In Iban society there is no semblance of any sort of unilateral, exogamous descent group of the type usually described as a lineage or clan. Instead, every individual belongs to an extensive bilateral group which may be termed a kindred. By kindred, I mean to denote that cognatic category which embraces all of an

[1] i.e., the long-houses of the districts of Pengulu Jenggut and Pengulu Grinang, during the year 1948.

[2] At Bawang Assan, for example, some 18 miles down river from Sibu, there are six long-houses all within earshot of one another. All the people of this area cultivate swamp *padi*.

[See analyst's note on p.5, Cat. 8 116,— Analyst]

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# Part II

## LAND TENURE

*Historical Introduction*

22. At the end of the eighteenth century, the basin of the great Rejang River was a sparsely populated region. The whole of its southern flank (the part which is the particular concern of this report), the area, that is, drained by the Kanowit, Poi, Ngemah, Katibas and Baleh rivers, was an unbroken tract of primeval rain-forest, virtually untouched by man. Here and there along the main rivers of this region (the Rejang between Sibu and the Pelagus Rapids, and parts of the Baleh), there were settled communities—such as the Kanowits, the Tanjongs, and the Lugats—living in long-houses and cultivating the land. But these scattered peoples numbered not more than one or two thousand souls, and their activities had wrought little change in their natural environment. Most of this vast tract of forest was the territory of bands of nomadic Ukits and Bukitans, who relied on the plants and animals of the jungle for their subsistence, and who did not practise the cultivation of rice, or of any other staple crop. During the nineteenth century major changes were to happen. This largely inviolate natural region became the scene of human migrations which were to alter the entire face of the land. The newcomers—the Iban—came from the immediate south. They were a virile and truculent people, whose whole way of life was based on the cultivation of hill rice. For them, the virgin forests of the valleys of the Rejang held the promise of those bountiful and heavy harvests which are the foremost aim of all Iban endeavour. Moreover these forests—so sparsely inhabited—were the territory of no powerful rival tribe; they were there for the taking, and take them the Iban did. By any standards these great Iban migrations into the Rejang and beyond were the most momentous happening in the social and economic history of nineteenth century Sarawak.

23. At the commencement of the nineteenth century, there were probably no Iban living north of the southern watershed of the Rejang basin. To-day, there are more than 114,000 Iban[1] settled in areas northward of this line (Sketch Map 2). They constitute more than one-fifth of the total population of Sarawak, and more than three-fifths of the entire Iban population of the country. In both the Third and Fourth Divisions, they are now the dominant groups in mixed populations.

24. The documentation of the Iban migrations into the valleys of the Rejang is far from complete (especially in its initial stages); but such records as do

[1]In the Population Census of 1947, the Iban (or Sea Dayak) population of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions is shown to be 113,498, while that of Brunei is shown as 1,330. The total population of Sarawak was 546,385, including 190,326 Ibans.

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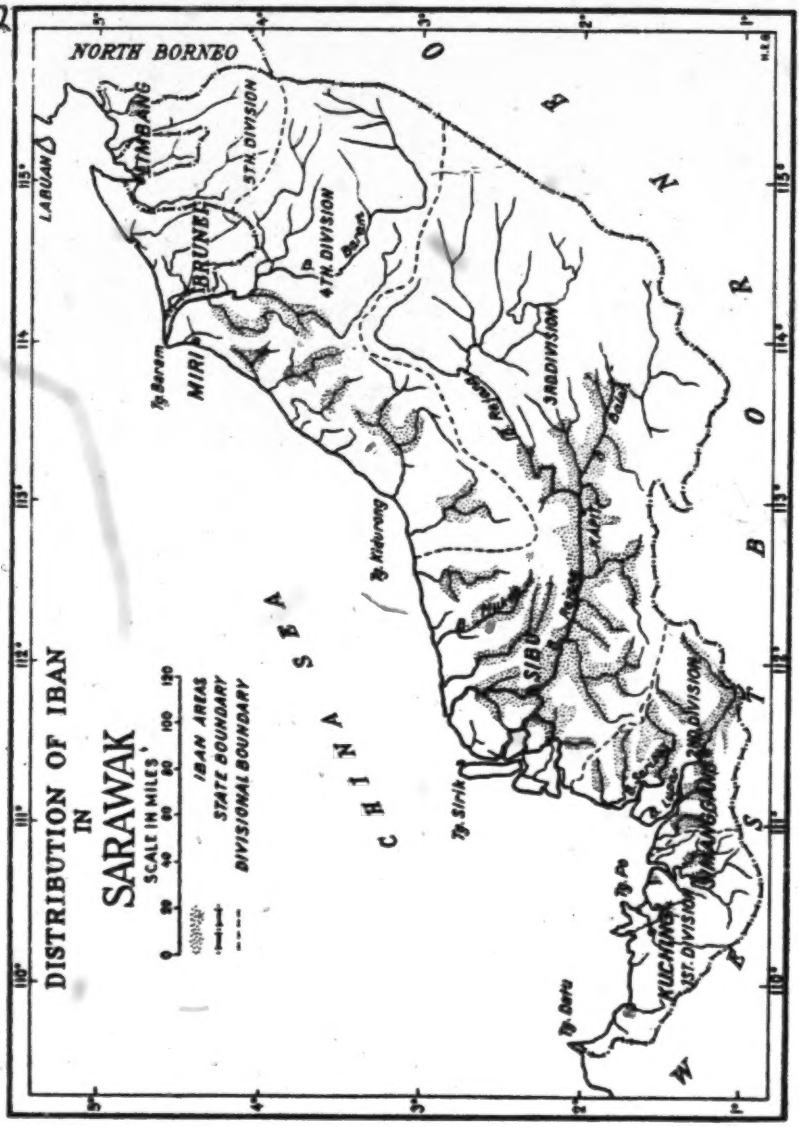


*Sketch Map* 2. Showing the Distribution of the Iban in Sarawak. (Based on the Census of 1947)

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# Part IV

## THE ECONOMICS OF AGRICULTURE

*Introduction*

592 161. We have singled out the autonomy of the *bilek* family as a fundamental feature of Iban economic organization. Let us now examine this proposition in greater detail, devoting our attention, in particular, to the economics of *padi* cultivation. We have seen that the Iban *bilek* family is an allodial group, possessing land and property in its own right. It is likewise an independent entity economically, for each *bilek* family manages its own farm (*umai*), producing as best it can the *padi* and other crops which it needs for its own subsistence. In agricultural matters, there is, among the Iban, an absence of any kind of communal ownership, production or consumption—a state of affairs entirely consistent with the principles of social structure enunciated in the first part of this report. Individualism is one of the salient values of Iban society, and in economic pursuits it is competition rather than co-operation which motivates *bilek* families.

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*The Organization of Labour*

592 162. The *bilek* family, we have noted, is a small group numerically and a 162 simple one genealogically. Both of these features have an important bearing on economic organization. The simple structure of the *bilek* family, arising from the fact that it is based essentially on the elementary family, means that among its members there is congruence of interest to a marked degree. The prevalence of partition, whereby large *bilek* families break up into autonomous units, precludes the existence of extended families; and only about 7% of *bilek* families contain married siblings, i.e. who are living as members of the same household. This means that in the great majority of cases a man is working for his own immediate family, and the same, of course, applies to women. Further, the simplicity in structure of the *bilek* family has as a concomitant, smallness in size. About 80% of Iban *bilek* families fall within the range of from two to seven members per family, and households of more than ten members are very rare, occurring in only about 2% of cases. Here clearly, we are faced with factors of profound importance in economic organization. Let us then examine the situation more closely, taking Rumah Nyala as an example.

592 163. In May, 1950, there were in Rumah Nyala, 25 *bilek* families[1] with a total 162 membership of 140 persons of all ages. About 66% were adults (i.e. 15 years of 464 age and over), while 34% were children. Of the adults, 41 were males and 52 females; and of the children, 30 were boys and 17 girls. In size the 25 *bilek* families ranged from 3 to 10 members; with a mean of 5·6, a median of 5, and a mode of 3 persons per household. Let us now turn to an analysis of the labour resources of these 25 *bilek* families, remembering that each *bilek* family is an independent unit economically. In assessing the labour force available to each *bilek* family we are interested only in those persons who were regularly engaged

[1]These 25 *bilek* families were divided into 26 farming units; c.f. Footnote 1 in p. 38.

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in *padi* cultivation during the period under review, i.e. 1949-50. But deciding whether or not a person is 'regularly engaged' in farming is, in some cases, a difficult task. Chiefly, this is because of the habit Iban men have of setting off, periodically, on *bejalai*, or journeys; so that it often happens that one of the male members of a family is absent for all or a major part of the agricultural year. In what follows I have listed as 'absent' those men who were away for all, or a major part (i.e. more than three-quarters) of the year. (When we come to discuss felling, etc., the necessary allowances will be made in an exact count of the number of men involved.) Again, there are the aged, who because they are decrepit, crippled or sick, are unable to participate in the normal activities of farming. Among the Iban the aged continue to work until they are physically incapacitated. Thus, very old men will assist in guarding a farm long after other tasks are beyond their strength; and aged women will devote their days to watching over *padi* laid out in the sun for drying, and in warding off with long bamboo poles the ever voracious domestic fowls. For our present purposes however, all those persons too old to join in the normal routine of *padi* cultivation have been excluded. On the other hand, a number of children, varying in age from 11 to 15 years, have been included in the labour teams. They are eight in all, seven being boys, and one a girl. The boys only participated to a limited extent, joining in the clearing of the undergrowth and in the felling of small trees, in dibbling—a little, and in threshing; the girl played an important part in sowing, weeding and reaping—for her *bilek* family. All children 10 years of age and under are omitted. Of the 140 members of the community, the following then are excluded:

| *Category* | *Males* | *Females* |
|---|---|---|
| (*a*) Absent on journeys .. .. | 9 | — |
| (*b*) Aged and sick (inc. one male moron) .. .. .. .. | 4 | 3 |
| (*c*) Children 10 years of age and under .. .. .. .. | 23 | 16 |
| *Totals:* .. .. | 36 | 19 |

164. This leaves a total of 85 persons who were actively engaged in all, or almost all, the routine farming tasks of their respective sexes. The dispersal of these 85 individuals in *bilek* families—and it is this with which we are essentially concerned—was as follows:

*Table 5: Bilek Family Labour Teams*

| Number of persons in *bilek* family's labour team .. .. .. .. .. | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Incidence .. .. .. .. .. | 8 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 |

It will be observed that in the majority (i.e. 86%) of cases, the labour force available to a *bilek* family is limited to two, three or four members; and this, as we shall see, imposes severe limits on the scale of Iban economic organization. Even more significant is the *bilek* family distribution of labour in terms of sex. This is shown in the two following tables:

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*Table 6: Number of Females in Bilek Family Labour Team*

| Number of females in *bilek* family's labour team | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Incidence | 8 | 13 | 5 |

*Table 7: Number of Males in Bilek Family Labour Team*

| Number of males in *bilek* family's labour team | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Incidence | 2 | 16 | 5 | 2 | 1 |

As these data suggest, most *bilek* families are limited, in farming, to one or two female workers and one male.

*The Custom of Bejalai*

484 165. Before discussing division of labour among the Iban, let us return to a more detailed account of the important custom of *bejalai*. *Bejalai*, literally 'to walk', also means 'to go on a journey', and it is used, by the Iban, to describe the important institution of a journey undertaken for material profit and social prestige. These journeys frequently last for several years, and often extend to remote corners of the vast island of Borneo, to Malaya and the islands of the Indies, and sometimes even to New Guinea. The expeditions take many different forms. Some (lasting for not more than about three to six months) are inland to the primeval jungle—there to cut *rotan*, fell timber, or tap *jelutong*, for sale to Chinese traders. Since the war many groups of Baleh Iban have undertaken journeys to Indonesian Borneo (chiefly to the Mahakam and the Apo Kayan), trading commodity goods with the tribes there, for brass gongs and the like. But the most coveted journey of all is seawards. All manner of employments are engaged in: lumber-jacking in the forests of the deltas, tobacco farming in North Borneo, or manual labour at the oil fields of Brunei. Before the war, parties of Iban were employed in Malaya in up-country survey and forestry work; to-day they are serving as trackers with British regiments in action against Chinese communists. Every European who has lived among the Iban must have had the experience of young men pleading to be taken on that most alluring journey of all: to Ai Europa—"the rivers of Europe".

484 554 304 166. For Iban young men then (and particularly since the cessation of head-hunting), going on journeys is the greatest and most consuming interest which life has to offer. The lure of the distant sea and its fabled ports is inducement enough; but added to this are varied opportunities to earn money, and ultimately to purchase a gong, a jar or a shot-gun for one's triumphant home-coming. But the most powerful incentive of all is the very considerable social prestige which a much journeyed man can command. Iban custom prescribes that only on a *bejalai* can a man be tattooed, and so the sophisticated and widely travelled are easy to recognize for their bodies are as thickly covered with tattooing as is a globe-trotter's portmanteau with labels; and both customs have the same purpose: the advertising of achievement. Of recent years indeed, some Iban have taken to the practice of having tattooed on their bodies the names of the places they have visited. One young man of Rumah Nyala had tattooed on his forearm the proud words: "*Suda kerja di Singapora*" ("Have worked in Singapore"). Above all, it

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is only after having accomplished many successful journeys that a man begins the performance of the series of elaborate rituals (all based on the institution of head-hunting) which confer social prestige in middle and old age.

167. Participation in the expeditions of older men begins soon after a lad reaches puberty, and during the next ten to fifteen years of his life going on *bejalai* is his principal preoccupation. As far as possible he times his various excursions to fit in with certain stages of the agricultural cycle. Ideally a young man returns to his long-house in about April, assists in the threshing, joins in the festivities that follow the harvest, lends a hand in the felling of the jungle for the next season's farm, and then, towards the end of June, is ready to set off once again. Sometimes he will wait until August or September to help in dibbling. During the months of weeding, guarding and reaping (i.e. October-March) however, it is rare to find young men living in their own long-houses. Some young fellows are disdainful of almost all farm work. Lagan (aged 22 years), of Rumah Nyala, had never assisted in any task other than felling, and this only once or twice; the running of the farm was left entirely to his elderly grandparents (70 and 65 years of age), who although they frequently complained of his behaviour were quite unable to alter his ways. Ujan (aged 19 years), who had six different expeditions (*bejalai*) to his credit, contributed—during the years 1949 and 1950—eight days to felling and two to the carrying in of the *padi*, but participated in no other farm work. Such are the untrammelled existences of young, unmarried men.

168. Moreover, marriage—in itself—has little effect on the wanderlust of the Iban. When a man marries for the first time—usually in his middle twenties—he can, in most cases, rely on his father or father-in-law to continue the management of the family farm. The son, or son-in-law, will try to be present for threshing, felling and dibbling, but during the six months when the *padi* is in the ground, he is free to roam as before. Only when a young man finds himself in the position of being the senior, active male member of his *bilek* family is he forced to restrain his proclivities, and to take over himself the arduous task of managing a farm.

*The Management of a Bilek Family Farm*

169. In the great majority of cases a man is not obliged to take over the management of his family's farm until he is over 30 years of age, and quite often not until he is approaching the age of 40 years. At Rumah Nyala in 1950, there were 16 married men 40 years of age and under (the youngest being 24 years), and during the period 1949-50, 12 (or 75%) of them took part in at least one lengthy (i.e. 3 months—6 months) *bejalai*. Of the four who did not participate, three were men who were the only adult male member of their respective *bilek* families. Further, of the 15 married men of the community, who were over 40 years of age and responsible for the management of a farm, only three (20%) went on a *bejalai* during the same period, 1949-50. We can say then that participation in journeys away from the long-house follows a clear pattern, which is related to the ages of the men concerned and their responsibilities for the management of the farms of their respective *bilek* families. This general pattern can be observed in Table 8.[1]

[1]There have been omitted from this summary: one moron (aged 32), and one simple-minded batchelor of 37 years.

(*a*) of the 5 unmarried men, *none* was responsible for the management of a *bilek* family farm;

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*Table 8: Participation in Bejalai by Men of Rumah Nyala*

| *Age and Marital Status* | *No. of Men* | *Number of these men who participated in one or more lengthy bejalai (3–6 mths.) during the years 1949–50* | *Percentage: participating in bejalai* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16–30 years; unmarried .. .. | 5 | 5 | 100% |
| Under 40 years; married .. .. | 16 | 12 | 75% |
| 41–60 years; married .. .. .. | 12 | 3 | 25% |
| Over 60 years; married .. .. | 6 | — | — |

170. As these data suggest, the main responsibilities of farming are left to older men, while the youthful—both unmarried and married—spend a high proportion of their time in seeking wealth outside of the long-house territory. A man's absence is, of course, felt economically only by his own *bilek* family, but it is perhaps of interest to give a general indication of the prevalence of *bejalai* among the Baleh Iban. On a number of different occasions I made counts of the number of men who were absent from a particular long-house. The results of five of these surveys are listed below. I have deliberately chosen stages of the agricultural cycle during which the labour of males is at a premium.

*Table 9: Prevalence of the Custom of Bejalai in the Baleh Region*

| *Name of long-house community* | *Date* | *Farming activity* | *No. of men absent on bejalai* | *Percentage of total number of males (16 yrs. and over) in the community* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| R. Nyala, S. Sut .. .. | April, 1949 | Threshing, etc. | 10 | 24% |
| " " .. .. | Oct., 1949 | Dibbling .. | 9 | 22% |
| " " .. .. | June, 1950 | Felling .. | 7 | 17% |
| R. Tungku, S. Tiau .. | July, 1950 | Felling .. | 18 | 22% |
| R. Sibat, S. Melinau .. | Sept., 1950 | Dibbling .. | 10 | 20% |

This Table enables us to make a general estimate that, throughout the year, about 20% of the adult male population of an Iban community is absent on some kind of journey or enterprise. It must be remembered, however, that this estimate applies to the Baleh, a pioneer region, where there has as yet been no large scale development of cash crops.

*The Economic Significance of the Custom of Bejalai*

171. We have stressed the fact that going on journeys is an over-ruling interest among young men, and a major element in the value system of Iban culture. It should also be emphasized that it is generally approved of, and indeed encouraged, by those who stay at home. For this there are very definite reasons. Iban culture sets especial store by certain kinds of traditional valuables, and in ceramics and

(*b*) of the 16 married men 40 years of age and under, 8 were responsible for the management of a *bilek* family farm;
(*c*) of the 12 married men between 41 and 60 years of age, *all* were responsible for the management of a *bilek* family farm;
(*d*) of the 6 men over 60 years of age, 3 were responsible for the management of a *bilek* family farm.

6: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1958 OC6 Iban OC6

# THE FAMILY SYSTEM OF THE IBAN OF BORNEO

Throughout the Baleh region there is marked cultural and social homogeneity; in none of the many other Baleh communities which I reconnoitred was there any significant divergence from the main regularities and principles established by the analysis of the 107 *bilek* families of our sample, and I have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the general findings of this essay are applicable to the Baleh region as a whole. Indeed, from my observations among the Iban of the Rejang, the Katibas, the Saribas and the Ulu Batang Ai and several other rivers of the Second and Third Divisions, there is good reason to suppose that the family system described in this essay is the family system of all the Iban tribes of Sarawak.

## THE BILEK FAMILY

The Iban *bilek* family has two dominant characteristics: it is a small group numerically, and a simple one genealogically. Table 1 shows the range in numerical composition of all the *bilek* families of the three long-houses of our sample.

Table 1. *Numerical composition of the 'bilek' family*

| Number of persons in *bilek* family | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rumah Nyala | – | 7 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | – | – | – | – |
| Rumah Sibat | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 4 | – | – | 3 | – | – | – | – |
| Rumah Tungku | 2 | 4 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 3 | – | 1 | – | 1 |
| Totals | 5 | 13 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 13 | 9 | 2 | 9 | – | 1 | – | 1 |

It will be seen that eighty of the 107 *bilek* families of the sample—that is, approximately 75 %—fall within the range of from three to seven members per family. The mode is four, and the median five persons per *bilek*; while the arithmetical mean is 5·75 persons per *bilek*, with a mean deviation of 1·8. This accords closely with other data available for the Baleh region [7]. When it is realized that the *bilek* family is the basic unit in agriculture as in almost all other activities, it will become apparent that its limited size is a factor of crucial importance in all economic pursuits. Similarly, it is a feature of cardinal sociological significance.

Now, while it is true that the *bilek* family is, in general, a small group numerically, an inspection of Table 1 will indicate that families do show a not inconsiderable range in size. This variation results from the fact that our sample includes *bilek* families at several different stages of development, from households consisting of a single married couple at one extreme to those which extend through four consecutive generations at the other.

174 Sarawak proper, namely, the Samarahan, the Sadong, the Batang Lupar, the Saribas, and the Klaka rivers. These Malays were pirate leaders, and they were glad to enrol large numbers of pagan fighting men among their followers . . . [they] found, no doubt, that their pagan relatives of Sumatra lent themselves more readily to this service than the less warlike Klémantans of Borneo, and therefore, as we suppose, they brought over considerable numbers of them and settled them about the mouths of these rivers". "It seems to us probable that the greater part of the ancestors of the Ibans entered Borneo in this way. But there is reason to think that some of them had settled at an earlier date in this part of Borneo and rather farther southward on the Kapuas River. . . . In most respects they closely resemble the other Iban tribes, but they are distinguished by some peculiarities of language and accent; their manners are gentler, their bearing less swaggering; they are less given to wandering" (II, p. 249).

We are not in a position to criticize the supposition that some 200 or 300 years ago Malay chiefs introduced Iban warriors from Sumatra to Sarawak, but Hose and McDougall recognize an earlier population of Iban in Borneo. It seems doubtful whether the characteristic Iban culture is so *recent as Hose and McDougall seem to imply*, and it would be interesting to know from what part of Sumatra "their pagan relatives" came, and if there are any traces there now of such people. We suggest that the Iban migration into Borneo may be regarded as an early wave of the movements that culminated in the Malay Empire.

Hose and McDougall (I, p. 31) state that the Iban "have spread northwards over Sarawak during the latter half of the last century, chiefly from the region of the Batang Lupar, where they are still numerous. They are still spreading northward, encroaching upon the more peaceful Klemantan tribes. They are most densely distributed in the lower reaches of the main 162 rivers of Sarawak, especially the Batang Lupar and Saribas rivers, which are now exclusively occupied by them; but they are found also in scattered communities throughout almost all parts of Sarawak, and even in British North Borneo, and they extend from their centre in Sarawak into the adjacent regions of Dutch Borneo, which are drained by the northern tributaries 101 of the Great Kapuas River". The different tribes or groups of Iban are 619 distinguished by the names of the rivers along which they dwell, thus they

342 long-house. At its outer edge (the front of the house) there is usually some kind of a railing, which at regular intervals is broken by the main entrances to the long-house. These consist of deeply notched hard-wood logs (*tangga*), which lead down—often at a steep angle—to paths ending at the river's edge. Ideally, a *tanju* is constructed from slats of iron-wood (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*), which can withstand for many years the extremes of the Borneo climate. A *tanju* is in constant use, for it is the place where, after the harvest, a family's *padi* is dried and winnowed prior to storing, and where, every few days, small quantities of *padi* are sunned before being pounded and sifted in readiness for cooking. Again it is on the *tanju* that the women's cotton is exposed to the cooling night dew, and the blazing midday sun, during the prolonged and intricate ritual that precedes dyeing.

342 11. It is the joining together of a number of different family apartments which produces the
621 attenuated structure known as a long-house. As has been stressed, each apartment (consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai* and *tanju*), is independently owned, and it follows from this that the general maintenance and repair of each section is always the responsibility of one particular family. Anyone familiar with the Iban will have observed the considerable range of variation among the different family apartments of a long-house; apartments roofed with meticulously made shingles may be found interspersed with apartments roofed with hastily improvised thatch; a *tanju* of well adzed iron-wood slats may be found side by side with one roughly made from split bamboos, so rotted as to imperil anyone who treads them. A long-house then, consists of a series of discrete sections joined roof to roof so as to produce a single architectural unit. And each of these apartments is the private property of a particular family. A long-house community is thus, in essence, a village consisting of a single street of attached houses. Let us now examine more closely the various family units of which a long-house community is composed—the houses, as it were, within the village—for these are basic corporate groups of Iban social and economic life.

*The Iban bilek-family.*

592 12. In Government and other publications the family apartments of an Iban long-house are commonly referred to as "doors". A long-house, that is, is usually described as consisting of so many doors—10 doors, 20 doors, or whatever the number may be. This term has the advantage that it may be applied to any of the indigenous peoples of Borneo that live in long-houses, but in this report—which is concerned exclusively with the Iban—I propose to employ the term *bilek*. *Bilek* is the word which the Iban use to describe the separate enclosed rooms of a long-house, but it is also a term used, by the Iban themselves, to refer to the family group which owns and occupies one apartment of a long-house, as, for example, in the phrases: "*Nya umai kami se bilek*" ("That is the farm of our *bilek*, or family"), and "*Kami se bilek tabin magang*" ("We, a *bilek-family*, are all ill"). The family group, described in the phrase: "*kami se bilek*" (we, the members of a *bilek*), is the basic unit of Iban social and economic organization. In the discussion that follows, I shall refer to this unit as the *bilek-family*.

13. The members of a *bilek-family* are always intimately related by ties of kinship and affinity, but it is a unit primarily defined by the criterion of local residence. Its members—as a group—own and occupy one, and only one, of the separate family apartments of a long-house, each apartment consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai* and *tanju*, as described. The *bilek-family* is also a domestic family; that is, its members constitute a single household. Food is prepared and cooked for the *bilek-family* as a whole, and its members usually eat together, sharing a common meal. The *bilek-family* is also an allodial unit, possessing both land and property in its own right. It is likewise an independent entity economically, cultivating its own *padi*, and a wide variety of other crops. Ritually, each *bilek-family* is a disparate unit with its own magical charms (*pengaroh*), its own particular set of ritual prohibitions or taboos (*pemali*), and its own special kind of sacred *padi* (*padi pun*). Among the Iban there are no clans or other large-scale corporate kin groups, and so the *bilek-family* is a social unit of primary and paramount importance.

592 14. The *bilek-family* has two dominant characteristics: it is a small group numerically, and
162 a simple one genealogically. Table 1, shows the range in numerical composition of the *bilek-families* of three long-house communities in the Baleh are: Rumah Nyala (25 doors), of the Sungai Sut, Rumah Sibat (32 doors), of the Sungai Melinau, and Rumah Tungku (50 doors), of the Sungai Tiau.[2] These three long-houses are discrete entities both territorially and socially, and they may be regarded as constituting a reliable sample for an examination of the social organization of the Iban of the middle and upper Rejang.

*Table 1. Numerical Composition of the Bilek-family.*

| Number of persons in bilek-family: | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 14 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency: R. Nyala | — | 7 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | — | — | — |
| R. Sibat | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 4 | — | — | 3 | — | — | — |
| R. Tungku | 2 | 4 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 3 | — | 1 | 1 |
| Totals: | 5 | 13 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 13 | 9 | 2 | 9 | — | 1 | 1 |

(2) These data refer to the composition of Rumah Nyala as on 1st May, 1950; Rumah Sibat as on 1st September, 1950; and Rumah Tungku as on 1st July, 1950.

592 162 594

It will be observed that 80 of the 107 *bilek-families* of the sample—that is, approximately 75%—fall within the range of three to seven members per family. The mode is four, and the median is five persons per *bilek*. For the three long-houses, the arithmetical mean is 5.75 persons per bilek-family. This accords closely with other data available for the Baleh region. Thus, the figure for Penghulu Jenggut's district, comprising 32 different long-houses was 5.78 persons per door; while that for Penghulu Grinang's district (of 29 long-houses) was also 5.75.[3] This average figure of 5.75[4] includes people of all ages—men, women and children—the aged and infirm as well as infants in arms. In the three long-houses of our sample, with a total population of 615, some 224 persons, or just over 36% were fifteen years of age and under. The aged (those over 65 years of age, that is, who are no longer able to undertake the heavy work of farming), and the disabled, account for about another 4% of the total.[5] When it is realised that among the Iban the *bilek-family* is the basic unit in agriculture as in all other activities, it will become apparent that its limited size is a factor of crucial importance in all economic pursuits. This situation will be discussed in detail at a later stage.

15. The genealogical composition of the 107 *bilek-families* under discussion is shown in Table 2. Adopted children are included.

*Table 2: Genealogical Composition of the Bilek-family.*

| *Type of bilek family.* | *Rumah Nyala.* | *Rumah Sibat.* | *Rumah Tungku.* | *Totals.* | *Approximate Percentage.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Man and wife. (no children) | — | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3% |
| Parents (or parent), and child or children. | 9 | 13 | 16 | 38 | 35% |
| Grandparent(s), and child or children (& spouses), and grandchild or grandchildren. | 13 | 11 | 23 | 47 | 44% |
| Great-grandparent, children (& spouses), grandchildren (& spouses), and great grandchildren. | 1 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 7% |
| Grandparents and grandchild. | 1 | — | — | 1 | 1% |
| Great-grandparents, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. | — | 2 | — | 2 | 2% |
| Parents and child or children, and sibling of one of parents. | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 5% |
| Grandparents, child or children, grandchildren, and sibling of one of grandparents. | — | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3% |
| *Totals:* | 25 | 32 | 50 | 107 | 100% |

It will be seen that the most prevalent type of family group is that containing three generations, that is, grandparents, parents and children (47 instances); and this is followed by the elementary family, composed of parents and their children (8 instances). These two categories account for about 80% of the 107 *bilek-families* of our sample. Moreover the remaining instances —as will be readily seen—are all very simple and consistent variants of these two main categories. Eight *bilek-families* contained individuals of four consecutive generations; and there were three instances of married couples without children, who had recently established their own *bileks*.

594 591

16. In other words the Iban *bilek-family* is essentially based on the simple or elementary family consisting of a father and a mother and their children. Iban society—as will have become apparent—is rigorously monogamous, and so there are no compound families. Again, the development of extended families is precluded by a strong tendency towards partition as soon as a *bilek-family* increases in size and collateral elementary families begin to emerge. Thus, in the three long-houses under discussion (comprising 107 *bilek-families*), there was not a single instance of married siblings possessing adult children, and yet still living together as members of the same *bilek-family*.[6] And further, there were only four instances of siblings remaining members of

(3) These figures, which are for the year 1948, were obtained from official records at Kapit fort.

(4) It would seem that this average size of the *bilek-family* is typical for Iban society as a whole. A comparison is possible with the Saribas—an area of marked cultural change. Investigations which I made at Gansurat (19 doors), of Sungai Layar, and Plandok (13 doors), of Sungai Paku, showed averages of 5.1 and 6.0 respectively.

(5) All data in this report concerning ages of Iban are careful estimates only. Illiteracy was (1949-51) universal in the Baleh area, and no birth records existed. However by a careful checking of genealogical information against known historical events (e.g. Government expeditions, the arrival and departure of District Officers, the doings of prominent Iban, etc., as recorded in the *Sarawak Gazette*, and elsewhere), it was possible to reach fairly accurate conclusions.

(6) Nor did I encounter an instance of this in Iban communities in any other part of Sarawak.

*TABLE 5. Extra-bilek Adoption.*

| *Instances of extra-bilek adoption.* | *R. Nyalu* | *R. Sibat* | *R. Tungku* | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Males* .. .. .. .. | 11 | 7 | 10 | 28 |
| *Females* .. .. .. .. | 4 | 6 | 15 | 25 |
| Totals: .. .. .. .. | 15 | 13 | 25 | 53 |
| *Number of bilek-families in which extra-bilek adoption occurred.* .. .. | 14 | 9 | 16 | 39 |
| *Percentage of bilek-families in which extra-bilek adoption occurred.* .. | 56% | 28% | 32% | *General Average:* 36% |

25. What are the conditions which result in this high incidence of extra-bilek adoption? Among the Iban the marriage rate is a very high one. In the three long-house communities which constitute our sample, there were some 239 persons over 30 years of age, and of these there were only three individuals—all of them men—who had not, at some time, been married. Furthermore, of these three, one was blind and the other two were mentally defective. On the basis of our sample it would seem that all normal individuals become married at some stage of their lives, though for a considerable proportion a state of permanent divorce eventually ensues. The marital status of the 239 individuals over 30 years of age, mentioned above, was as follows:

*TABLE 6. Marital Status of Individuals 31 Years of Age and Over.*

| *Marital Status.* | *Number of Individuals.* | *Percentage. (Approx.)* |
|---|---|---|
| Married .. .. .. .. | 150 | 62% |
| Widows and Widowers .. .. .. | 49 | 21% |
| Not yet married .. .. .. .. | 3 | 1% |
| Divorced—but living with offspring by previous marriage .. .. .. | 21 | 9% |
| Divorced—but having an adopted child .. | 6 | 3% |
| Divorced—and having no children .. | 10 | 4% |

Despite the high marriage rate, childless unions—resulting either from sterility or infant mortality—are fairly common. Thus a count of all the long-standing contemporary marriages (marriages, that is, of 10 years and more duration; both husband and wife still living) shows that about 20% of them are childless. These are the couples that, in the absence of children of their own, have recourse to adoption.

26. Mention has been made of the way in which the *bilek-family* persists through time as an allodial unit. If this process is to continue without intermission, the family must perpetuate itself: each generation must produce the children who are to inherit the *bilek* and its valuables in the next. It is possible for a family to fail in this task, and so to become extinct. The Iban use the word *punar*, meaning sterile, to describe this event, as in the phrase: *"Bilek sida udah punar"* (Their *bilek-family* has become extinct"). It must not be thought however that the extinction of a *bilek-family* is a common process; on the contrary, such a happening is extremely rare, for every effort is made to avoid so ignominious a fate. In the last resort, the one or two remaining survivors will seek amalgamation with some other *bilek-family*, but the preferable and more usual course is to augment the dwindling family by the adoption of new members. In most cases children are adopted, but instances of adults being adopted do sometimes occur. An analysis of the 53 extra-*bilek* adoptions appearing in Table 5, shows that about 70% of them were made by persons having no children of their own. This percentage demonstrates clearly the principal motive prompting adoption. Adoption enables childless couples to escape from their predicament. The children which they adopt and rear can be relied upon to care for their adoptive parents in their old age. In Iban society, based as it is on a subsistence economy, the aged have no one to look to but their own or their adopted children, and their grandchildren, within the *bilek-family*. In due course, the children which a couple adopt will become their heirs, inheriting the *bilek* and all the property it contains, and so ensuring its survival as an independent unit. In a limited number of cases adoption saves the *bilek* from extinction. Thus of the 107 *bilek-families* of the three long-house communities: Rumah Nyalu, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, some 17, or approximately 16%, depended on an adoption for their future existence.

17:Bedford D-5 (1958) 1959 OC6 Iban OC6
Rumah Bujak



175 During the occupation the Japanese cut a channel through
[133] the narrow waist of a *tanjong* downriver from Simanggang. As a consequence water was diverted from a large loop of the river which dried out leaving an area of very fertile padi land. The people of Rumah Bujak settled on this land in 1943.

[423] After the occupation disputes arose regarding right of tenure of land on which the people of Rumah Bujak had settled. Several legal actions arose, as a result of which the people of Rumah Bujak were allowed to remain where they were. They also retain the rubber gardens at the site of their old house at Sungai Pinggai.

342 The present house was built in 1946. Several *langkaus* (temporary dwellings) were built alongside the house in 1955.

The original house built at Pruan contained 19 doors. Since its completion 11 *langkaus* have been built at the ends of the original longhouse.

162 The population of the longhouse was 169 at the start of the
621 investigation. During the period of investigation there were five births and one death. The death was that of a monster shortly
165 after birth, following a pregnancy complicated by hydramnios.

361 The house is built on low-lying tidal swamp. On two or three days each month the ground under and about the house is
356 flooded at high tide. The rooms are small, dark and hot. Some
342 are kept moderately clean but some are very dirty. The majority of rooms have separate kitchens.

231 Animals and poultry are reared under the house. The ground underneath and around the house is liberally strewn with
364 rubbish of all descriptions. There is no formal system of sewage
514 disposal. The occupants of the house defaecate and micturate through holes in the verandah and at the rear of the rooms in the time honoured fashion. Faeces are devoured by pigs and
[231] poultry.

*Agriculture*

241 The people of Rumah Bujak own extremely fertile swamp
433 padi land. They grow sufficient rice for their own needs and

TABLE 6 A
A

Number of People Employed in Timber
March, 1971

SAWMILL

| NO* | Malay | Chinese | Iban | Melanau | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 5 | 300 | 1 | | |
| 2. | 5 | 53 | 5 | 2 | |
| 3. | 5+ | 40 | 10 | 30 | 10 |
| 4. | 15 | 20 | 20 | 6 | 2 |
| 5. | 1 | 43 | 19 | 28 | 7 (Kayan) |
| 6. | 15 | 30 | 57 | 20 | 4 |
| 7.) | | | | | |
| 8. | | 49 | | 58 | |
| 9. | 5 | 20 | 8 | | |
| 10. | 3 | 5 | 1 | | |
| 11. | | 14 | | 40 | |
| 12. | | | | | |
| 13. | 7 | 110 | 8 | | |
| 14. | 6 | 25 | 32 | | |
| 15. | | | | | |
| 16. | 19 | 53 | 10 | 4 | |
| 17. | 1 | 20 | 5 | | |
| 18. | 4 | 8 | 14 | | |
| 19. | | | | | |
| 20. | 6 | 7 | 12 | 108 | 1 (Kayan) |
| 21. | 98 | 67 | | 17 | |
| 22. | 59 | 8 | 2 | | |
| 23. | | | | | |
| 24. | 6 | 122 | | 4 | |
| 25. | | 30 | | | |
| 26. | 8 | 30 | | | |
| 27. | | 3 | | | |
| 28. | | | | | |
| 29. | 2 | 3 | 2 | | |
| 30. | | | | | |
| 31. | | | | | |
| 32. | 5 | 101 | 20 | | |
| | 268 | 39 | 76 | 5 | 3 (Selalang Ply-wood Factory-Forest, 2nd D.; (Ding Brothers Moulding Plant, No Forest) |
| TOTALS | 574 | 1520 | 302 | 342 | 27 |

* NO. refers to names of companies operating in Sibu Section as on Map, Figure 2.

A, [This is part of a more extensive table, which may be found on pages 56-58--Analyst]
4

TABLE 6

Number of People Employed in Timber March, 1971

SAWMILL

| No.* | Malay | Chinese | Iban | Melanau | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 5 | 300 | 1 | | |
| 2. | 5 | 63 | 5 | 2 | |
| 3. | 34 | 40 | 10 | 30 | 10 |
| 4. | 15 | 20 | 20 | 6 | 2 |
| 5. | 1 | 43 | 19 | 28 | 7(Kayan) |
| 6. | 15 | 30 | 57 | 20 | 4 |
| 7. | | | | 58 | |
| 8. | | 49 | | | |
| 9. | 5 | 20 | 8 | | |
| 10. | 3 | 5 | 1 | | |
| 11. | | 14 | | 40 | |
| 12. | | | | | |
| 13. | 7 | 110 | 8 | | |
| 14. | 6 | 25 | 32 | | |
| 15. | | | | | |
| 16. | 19 | 53 | 10 | 4 | |
| 17. | 1 | 20 | 5 | | |
| 18. | 4 | 8 | 14 | | |
| 19. | | | | | |
| 20. | 6 | 7 | 12 | 108 | 1(Kayan) |
| 21. | 98 | 67 | | 17 | |
| 22. | 59 | 8 | 2 | | |
| 23. | | | | | |
| 24. | 6 | 122 | | 4 | |
| 25. | | 30 | | | |
| 26. | 8 | 30 | | | |
| 27. | | 3 | | | |
| 28. | | | | | |
| 29. | 2 | 3 | 2 | | |
| 30. | | | | | |
| 31. | | | | | |
| 32. | 5 | 101 | 20 | | |
| | 268 | 39 | 76 | 5 | 3 (Belalang Plywood Factory-Forest, 2nd D.,)(Ding Brothers Moulding Plant, No Forest) |
| TOTALS | 574 | 1520 | 302 | 342 | 27 |

*No. refers to names of companies operating in Sibu Section as on Map, Figure 2.

TABLE 6 (Cont'd)

| HD | Malay | Chinese | Iban | Melanau | Othe |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | | |
| 2. | 100 | 7 | | 200 | |
| 3. | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | |
| 5. | | 5 | | 164 | |
| 6. | 70 | 10 | 70 | 150 | |
| 7. | | | | 235 | |
| 8. | | | | | |
| 9. | 50 | | | 100 | |
| 10. | | 3 | 30 | | |
| 11. | | | | 32 | |
| 12. | | | | | |
| 13. | 317 | | | 56 | |
| 14. | | | | | |
| 15. | | | | | |
| 16. | 65 | | | 82 | |
| 17. | | | | 55 | |
| 18. | 99 | 1 | | | |
| 19. | 100 | | | | |
| 20. | 57 | 3 | 17 | 56 | |
| 21. | | 1 | 29 | 160 | |
| 22. | | | | | |
| 23. | | | | | |
| 24. | | | 10 | 200 | |
| 25. | | | | | |
| 26. | | | | | |
| 27. | | 7 | | | |
| 28. | | | | | |
| 29. | | 53 | 102 | | |
| 30. | | | | | |
| 31. | | | | | |
| 32. | | 10 | 22 | 80 | |
| | | | 165 | | |
| | | | 200 | | |
| | 100 | | | | |
| TOTALS | 998 | 100 | 645 | 1570 | |

TABLE 6 (Cont'd)

RAFTING

| No | Malay | Chinese | Iban | Melanau | Othe |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | | |
| 2. | 30 | | 10 | | |
| 3. | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | |
| 6. | 55 | | 7 | | |
| 7. | | | | | |
| 8. | | | | | |
| 9. | | | | 6 | |
| 10. | | | 5 | | |
| 11. | | | | 4 | |
| 12. | | | | | |
| 13. | 22 | | 2 | | |
| 14. | | | | | |
| 15. | | | | | |
| 16. | | | | 14 | |
| 17. | 16 | | 5 | 5 | |
| 18. | 8 | | | | |
| 19. | 10 | | | | |
| 20. | | | | | |
| 21. | | | | | |
| 22. | | | | | |
| 23. | | | | | |
| 24. | 21 | | | | |
| 25. | | | | | |
| 26. | | 10 | 3 | | |
| 27. | | | | | |
| 28. | | | | | |
| 29. | | 2 | 3 | 17 | |
| 30. | | | | | |
| 31. | | | | | |
| 32. | 6 | | | | |
| TOTALS | 168 | 12 | 35 | 46 | |

18:Sutlive E,M-S (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu



processing and manufacture from Indonesia.

4. Rice

243 262 771 Rice is the basic food among the Ibans and other peoples of Sarawak, and, as will be discussed later, much ritual and religious belief is associated with every aspect of rice cultivation. From the inaugaration of the annual activities with augury and ceremonial claiming of the fields to be farmed, until the concluding crooning to the rice-spirit as the grain is stored away, the acquisition of rice is an all-embracing way of life among the Ibans, touching on every aspect 192 261 of their lives. To eat(makai) means, in Iban, to eat rice. And no matter how filling and varied other foods are, an Iban has not eaten until he has partaken of rice.[39]

243 162 According to the 1960 census (Jones 1960: 260-1), 46 per cent of the total Sarawak population depended either entirely or primarily on rice cultivation for their living. As indicated in Table 7 on the following page, Ibans account for almost two-thirds of all rice farmers. And of the total economically active Iban population, almost 89 per cent are engaged entirely or primarily in rice cultivation.

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[39] After eating a large dinner- but no rice - with our family, some Iban visitors left and went to the pasar to eat. When we accidentally encountered them at their second meal, we apologized for their going away hungary, "Oh no, they politely replied, your food was very good, but we hadn't eaten (rice) yet."

18-Native E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu



TABLE 7

Rice Farmers, 1960

243 463 162 171

| | Persons engaged primarily in rice farming | Percentage of all rice farmers | Economically active population | Percentage economically active population in rice farming |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Malay | 20,220 | 11.9 | 42,975 | 47.1 |
| Melanau | 4,399 | 2.7 | 17,712 | 26.0 |
| Land Dayak | 19,878 | 11.7 | 23,498 | 84.6 |
| Iban | 108,889 | 64.2 | 122,701 | 88.7 |
| Other indigenous | 13,959 | 8.2 | 17,042 | 81.9 |
| Chinese | 1,734 | 1.0 | 67,171 | 2.6 |
| Europeans | ----- | ---- | 769 | ----- |
| Others | 387 | 0.2 | 2,417 | 16.0 |
| Sarawak Totals | 169,666 | 99.9 | 294,285 | 57.6 |

243 In the Third Division, both hill rice (padi bukit) and swamp rice (padi paya) are grown. Although some hill rice is grown in all of the Districts of the Third Division, most is it is grown in the Kapit District. In the agricultural year of 1969-1970, an estimated 77,780 acres were planted with hill rice with an average yield of 110 to 140 gantangs per acre.[40] Swamp rice is grown on the flat, lowland soils, especially [654] in the Sibu and Mukah Districts. The average yield per acre for 1969-1970 was 250 gantangs of padi, and for those who participated in the skim padi ("Assistance to Wet-Padi Planters Scheme," initiated on a small scale in 1959 and considerably expanded under the Sarawak Development Plan,

[40] A gantang is a dry measure, containing about four kati (5 1/3 pounds) of unhusked rice (padi) or six kati (8 pounds) of husked rice (beras). Average consumption per adult male is four gantang, per female three gantang per month.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu



this chapter the pattern which was established by the second decade of this century of unemployed persons coming into the pasar to seek work. The number of Ibans who came in during the first half-century was relatively small because there were few opportunities open to them. With the development of Sibu during the past twenty-five years, however, and the proliferation of schools near longhouse communities, more and more Ibans are seeking employment in or through the pasar.

According to the 1960 Census, 96 per cent of all economically active Iban males and 99 per cent of all economically active females were engaged in rice cultivation. Table 14 presents the other categories in which Ibans were working at that time. Regrettably, data are not yet available from the 1970 Census to indicate shifts in employment categories, but upon the basis of a survey conducted in connection with this study and upon the author's impression, it is most likely that the number and percentage of persons employed in non-agricultural categories has increased significantly.

The Iban population of Sibu fluctuates considerably as members of the society move in and out of the pasar. This makes the task of ascertaining the number of Ibans who may be termed permanent residents of the urban area difficult if not impossible, by admission of an official of the Department of Statistics, Kuala Lumpur, and of the Urban District Council. However, the importance of Sibu as a recruitment center has

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 196 ]

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462 prompted a considerable number of Ibans to seek employment in the pasar, 464 so that while the Iban population in the urban area was 693 persons in 369 1960, it is my estimate that presently the number is about four or five times that figure, or approximately 3,000.

On the basis of a survey conducted in 1970, of 200 Iban residents in the urban area, 171 were employed and the other 29 were housewives. The 171 persons were employed in some 35 different categories, as indicated in Table 15. Thus, another important function in the development of Sibu as an urban center has been the recruitment of men and women for work either in Sibu or other areas.

462 One final note must be made about the young Iban women who are 548 listed under the categories of waitresses, bar-girls and "self-employed 369 females." A number of these women engage in what may be described as moonlighting activities because of the attractive rewards. Some of the women are recruited by agents (beroka) from Sibu, others are encouraged by women already in the pasar, while still others are enlisted by male companions. Given the casual attitude of many Ibans towards sex and the position of relative equality which women enjoy in the society, together with the less economically rewarding activities in the longhouse, it is not surprising that several score young Iban women, as well as some members of other ethnic groups, have taken up residence in the urban area.

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TABLE 15

A Sample of Economically Active Ibans
Sibu, 1970

| CATEGORY | NUMBER | |
|---|---|---|
| | Employed | Self-employed |
| Government: | | |
| Cooperative Officers | 2 | |
| Medical Doctors | 2 | |
| Lab Technicians | 2 | |
| Other Medical Work | 11 | |
| District Officer | 1 | |
| Prison Warden | 1 | |
| Public Works | 3 | |
| Teachers/Education | 4 | |
| Agriculture | 4 | |
| Telecommunications | 1 | |
| Customs | 1 | |
| Police, Rangers* | 29 | |
| Overseas Survey | 1 | |
| Civil Defense | 1 | |
| Councils: | | |
| Secretary | 1 | |
| Clerk | 1 | |
| Midwife | 1 | |
| Political Parties: | 4 | |
| Banks, Trades, Companies: | | |
| Office Boys | 2 | |
| Import-Export Clerk | 1 | |
| Construction Laborers | 20 | |
| Waitresses, Bar Girls | 11 | |
| Piling Operators | 3 | |
| Theaters | 3 | |
| Brickworks Laborer | 1 | |
| Electricity Company | 1 | |
| Custodians | 3 | |
| Water Board | 2 | |
| Cooks, Maids | 5 | |
| Females, "Self-employed" | | 10** |
| Trishaw Drivers | | 5 |
| Church: | | |
| Literature Production | 2 | |
| Ministers | 8 | |
| Gardeners | 4 | |
| | 156 | 15 |

*Does not include Field Force of whom there are an estimated 1,000 and their families.

**Prostitutes.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

## IBAN ADAPTATION

182 The Ibans' adaptation to their habitat has included a number of different activities and responses. These have been expressed in the techniques and rituals which they have used to acquire the food and other goods which they have deemed necessary for their living, and in the ways in which they have organized themselves to make meaningful the responses they have made to both their physical habitat and their cultural environments.

243 Traditionally, the Ibans' quest for food has been divided among a number of different activities, the most important being rice horti- [708] culture. As we discuss in some detail in this chapter, rice cultivation is a highly ritualized activity with symbols which are interrelated with [771] a number of other highly valued practices. As with numerous other peoples, rice cultivation is not merely a technique of acquisition but a way of life that is supported by and in turn supports Iban theology, cosmology and eschatology. We will consider in a later chapter on Iban culture the basic value of self-sufficiency, by which members of the society are scaled in the class system.

243 Less than forty per cent of Iban cultivators are self-sufficient [162] in rice, and must supplement their farming with other means of obtaining their food supply.

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## TABLE 18

### Generation Profile
### Selected Longhouses
### 1960 - 1966 - 1970

| Numbers in 1970 Census | Tuai Rumah | Area/ Sungai | Year | Number of Bilik-Families | Number of Generations per Bilik-Family One | Two | Three | Four |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gelí | Bawang | 1960 | 25 | 1 | 8 | 16 | |
| | | Assan | 1966 | 32 | | 18 | 14 | |
| | | | 1970 | 35 | 2 | 16 | 17 | |
| 7 | Salleh | Bawang | 1960 | 26 | 1 | 12 | 13 | |
| | | Assan | 1966 | 28 | 1 | 16 | 11 | |
| | | | 1970 | 27 | | 14 | 13 | |
| 88 | Buga | Penasu | 1960 | 10 | | 7 | 3 | |
| | | | 1966 | 25 | 2 | 19 | 4 | |
| | | | 1970 | 26 | 1 | 19 | 6 | |
| 90 | Aus | Penasu | 1960 | 18 | 2 | 10 | 6 | |
| | Bain | | 1966 | 22 | 3 | 16 | 3 | |
| | | | 1970 | 22 | 1 | 17 | 3 | 1 |
| | Jala | Batu | 1960 | 17 | | 12 | 5 | |
| | | Burak | 1966 | 14 | | 7 | 7 | |
| | | | 1970 | 27 | | 11 | 16 | |
| 92 | Unking | Penasu | 1960 | 14 | 2 | 11 | 1 | |
| | [illegible]nasu | | 1966 | 21 | 3 | 16 | 2 | |
| | | | 1970 | 19 | | 14 | 5 | |
| 97 | Nyala | Aup | 1960 | 19 | | 8 | 11 | |
| | | | 1966 | 26 | 1 | 14 | 11 | |
| | | | 1970 | 33 | 2 | 19 | 12 | |

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

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TABLE 18 (Cont'd)

| Numbers in 1970 Census | Tuai Rumah | Area/ Sungai | Year | Number of Bilik-Families | Number of Generations per Bilik-Family | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | One | Two | Three | Four |
| 100 | Mat | Lavang | 1960 | 18 | 4 | 11 | 3 | |
| | | | 1966 | 12 | 4 | 7 | 1 | |
| | | | 1970 | 11 | 2 | 6 | 3 | |
| 123 | Sinten | Rian, Naman | 1960 | 29 | | 20 | 9 | |
| | | | 1966 | 24 | | 12 | 12 | |
| | | | 1970 | 27 | 1 | 15 | 11 | |
| | Buda | Naman | 1960 | 10 | 1 | 6 | 3 | |
| | | | 1966 | 10 | | 7 | 3 | |
| | | | 1970 | 16 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| 186 | Nyambang | Oya Rd. Batu 6½ | 1960 | 16 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 1 |
| | | | 1966 | 18 | 1 | 10 | 7 | |
| | | | 1970 | 16 | 2 | 8 | 6 | |
| 197 | Pg.Poh | Pasai | 1960 | 33 | | 14 | 19 | |
| | | | 1966 | 33 | 2 | 17 | 14 | |
| | | | 1970 | 31 | | 16 | 13 | |
| 199 | Sirai | Pasai Bon | 1960 | 16 | | 6 | 10 | |
| | | | 1966 | 22 | 1 | 14 | 7 | |
| | | | 1970 | 19 | | 13 | 6 | |
| 185 | Tindit | Oya Rd. 13½ | 1960 | 17 | 1 | 9 | 7 | |
| | | | 1966 | 9 | | 6 | 3 | |
| | | | 1970 | 12 | 1 | 7 | 4 | |
| 241 | Berandah | Durin | 1960 | 47 | 1 | 23 | 23 | |
| | | | 1966 | 58 | 2 | 32 | 24 | |
| | | | 1970 | 61 | 3 | 39 | 19 | |
| | | | TOTALS | 1051 | 52 | 396 | 400 | 3 |

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162 A second principal reason for fluctuation in the composition of the bilik-family is related to bilik partition.[7] Partition occurs when an individual or family removes from the natal bilik to found a new, separate bilik. That this is common may be ascertained by reference to Table 18, A in which nine of the 15 longhouses surveyed showed an increase in the number of bilik-families, the principal cause being partition. Partition arises primarily from the development of collateral nuclear
592 families with divergent and incompatible interests. Within the bilik,
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621 property is divided into common and private. In the more traditional long-
421 house, common property included temuda' (farm lands cleared by ancestors), fruit trees, rubber and pepper gardens, brassware, large Chinese jars, antique bowls and plates, ceremonial garments and ornaments, pua' kumbu' (woven blankets) and other woven materials, augury sticks, charms and medicines, sacred and ordinary rice seed, and human skulls (antu pala'). In more modern houses, such as Rumah Nyala, Imba and Nyelang, common property also includes wrought iron furniture with vinyl-covered, foam rubber cushions, glass-front cupboards, desks, vanity tables, and dining
534 room suites. At Rumah Nyala, it even includes a share in the combo in-
377 struments, purchased at a cost of $1700 by the entire longhouse community, and the electrical wiring and fluorescent tubes, as well as the dynamo (Iban dilemo) for powering the electric supply.

[7] See Freeman's excellent discussion on "Partition," 1970:41-55.

A, [See p. 254--Analyst]

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> "the positive advantages of independence are many. Having a bilek of their own gives a man and his wife the opportunity to live and work without interference, and in the knowledge that they will not have to share the fruits of their labours with others. To the Iban, who are nothing if not calculating and ambitious individualists, this is an immense attraction."

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Partition is a regulatory mechanism on the size of the bilik-family, which, despite the movement of individuals or families in and out, remains few in number. From data gathered on the populations of Rumah Nyala, Imba and Nyelang, on 88 bilik-families, the overall average for the population of 445 persons was 5.1 persons per family. Rumah Imba had the lowest average with 4.6 persons per bilik, and Rumah Nyelang had the highest with 5.6 persons per bilik.

**TABLE 19**

**Numerical Composition of Bilik-Families**

| Number of Persons per bilik-family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Average per bilik-families |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency: | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rumah Nyala | 2 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 5.0 |
| Rumah Imba | - | 1 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | 4.6 |
| Rumah Nyelang | - | - | 4 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 5.6 |
| Totals | 2 | 6 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 4 | - | - | 2 | |

In the larger sample of Table 18, the total population in 1970 for the 15 longhouses was 2,054, living in 382 bilik-families. The average for that larger sample is 5.4 persons per bilik. As previously noted, the genealogical composition fluctuates between two and three generations.

his speech will be powerful and effective, bisa), by his paternal and maternal kinsmen upon the child's first entrance into their bilik. The principle of bilateral attachment is crucial in Iban social organization, and to our understanding of the society beyond the bilik-family. We shall discuss the Iban suku-juru in a later section of this chapter.

In Table 20, the membership of children living as members of their father's natal bilik, their mother's natal bilik, or in their parents' bilik neolocally, is presented for Rumah Nyala, Imba and Nyelang.

TABLE 20

Residence of Children by Birth

| Longhouse | Father's Natal Bilik | Mother's Natal Bilik | Neolocal |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nyala | 12 | 22 | 7 |
| Imba | 9 | 17 | 3 |
| Nyelang | 13 | 10 | 4 |
| Totals | 34 | 49 | 14 |

Unlike the situation described by Freeman (1970:16) for longhouses in Kapit District, where membership of children was about equally divided between the bilik-family of either mother or father, there is a greater number of families in which children are living as members of their mother's natal bilik than those in which they are living as members of their father's natal bilik. These cases, taken together with those in which families are residing neolocally comprise almost two-thirds of the bilik-families. Children lived as members of their father's natal bilik in 34 families,

597 In Rumah Nyala, Imba and Nyelang, cases of adoption that occurred were invariably between different bilik-families, and always between close kinsmen. No instance of adoption of a child by a member of the same bilik as the child's parents occurred. In Table 21 the incidence of adoption in each of the houses is shown.

TABLE 21

Incidence of Adoption

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| | Rumah Nyala | Rumah Imba | Rumah Nyelang | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 3 | 2 | 7 | 12 |
| Females | 0 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Totals | 3 | 5 | 11 | 19 |
| Number of bilik in which adoption occurred | 2 | 5 | 7 | 14 |
| Percentage of bilik in which adoption occurred | 6% | 17.8% | 25.9% | General Average:15.9% |

[184] The number of cases of adoption as well as the general average of adoptions per longhouse are significantly less than the number and average reported by Freeman (1970:17) for the Kapit District. In Rumah Nyala, there are only two bilik-families in which adoption occurred. In Rumah
597 Nyelang, children were adopted in seven of the families. In every instance, the family giving up a child for adoption had a large number of children (by their own assessment), and the family adopting had none. For example, Jinggut (Bilik No. 2) and his wife, Tipong, had 12 children, five of whom eventually were adopted by siblings. Tuai Rumah Nyelang

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TABLE 22

Composition of Bilik-Families

| Members of Bilik-Family | Rumah Nyala | Rumah Imba | Rumah Nyelang | Totals | Percentage (Approximate) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Widow, Widower | 2 | - | - | 2 | 2 |
| Man and Wife (no children) | - | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Mother and child | 1 | 1 | - | 2 | 2 |
| Mother, daughter and grandchild | 1 | 1 | - | 2 | 2 |
| Parents and child (children) | 20 | 17 | 21 | 58 | 66 |
| Parents, child and spouse | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Parents, child's spouse and grandchildren | 2 | 5 | 3 | 10 | 12 |
| Mother, child's spouse and grandchildren | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 8 |
| Mother, child's husband, grandchild's spouse, great grandchild | - | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Mother's brother, daughter's husband, grandchild | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Parents, father's sister and brother, children | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Father, daughter and spouse, children | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Mother and mother's mother, father's mother, mother's sister, children | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| | 33 | 28 | 27 | 88 | 100 |

593 of food, clothing or money to both sets of parents, and in family
431 situations observed by the writer, both husband's and wife's parents visited their children and not infrequently were given passage and pocket money for their return trips to the longhouse. Though the statements made by couples claiming to support both parents to some degree may be untrue, yet it is significant as an indication of the recognition of some responsibility that ought to be assumed and enacted.

591 Postmarital residence may be either virilocal, uxorilocal or neolocal, depending upon the circumstances of the families involved in making the arrangements. In Table 23 the postmarital residence patterns for Rumah Nyala, Imba and Nyelang are given.

TABLE 23

Postmarital Residence

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| Longhouse | Virilocal | Uxorilocal | Neolocal |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nyala | 21 | 26 | 2 |
| Imba | 16 | 28 | - |
| Nyelang | 20 | 17 | - |
| Totals | 57 | 71 | 2 |
| Percentages | 43.8% | 54.6% | 1.6% |

In Rumah Nyala and Imba, there is a predominance of cases of men who are living with their wives' families. The number of instances of uxorilocal residence in the two houses outnumbers those of virilocal residence by 54 to 37. In Rumah Nyelang, there is a predominance of

591 virilocal residence by 20 to 17 cases. Overall in the three houses,
162 there are 71 cases in which men are living uxorilocally, or 54.6 per cent of the total, 57 cases in which women are living virilocally, or 43.8 per cent of the total, and two cases of neolocal residence, or 1.6 per cent of all the residences surveyed in the three houses.

591 When a person marries out of his bilik-family, he loses all rights
421 of inheritance by his attachment to the bilik-family of his spouse. At
428 the time of his separation from the family, he is given a portion (pemai') of the family's common property, consisting of one jar (tajau sigi') and one bronze gong (bebendai sigi'). If the family has an abundance of farmland and rubber or pepper gardens, he may be given an amount of land, the basis for division being one acre for the child who marries out to two acres for the child who remains in the bilik to care for the parents. One aspect of the rights of the child who marries out that must be emphasized is the privilege of returning to farm land felled by his ancestors. Marrying out does not result in a surrender of rights to cultivate land in one's natal bilik-family.

592 When an individual marries into his spouse's bilik, he acquires
606 equal rights with other members of that family. Thus, although he main-
607 tains the rights mentioned above of cultivating land held by his natal bilik-family, this privilege rarely is activated because he receives rights to land through his spouse (bisi' bagi ari bini tauka laki ia). Not infrequently, the affine assumes the most important role in the family.

592 606 607 Thus, in Rumah Nyala, 14 of 33 tuai bilik were affines. In Table 24 the number of affinal and natal or adoptive members who are economically active in Rumah Nyala, Imba and Nyelang are shown.

TABLE 24

Economically Active Members in Bilik-Families

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| Longhouse | Natal/Adopted Member | Affinal Members |
|---|---|---|
| Nyala | 53 | 27 |
| Imba | 48 | 31 |
| Nyelang | 48 | 34 |
| | 149 | 92 |
| Percentages | 61.8% | 38.2% |

The number of economically active affines (27) in Rumah Nyala is only about one-half that of natal or adopted members (53) of bilik-families. Affinal members constitute only 33.7 per cent of the total labor force. However, the importance of affines as principal workers in padi-farming is almost equal to that of the other group, natal or adopted members constituting the main cultivator in 14 cases, affines in 13 cases. On the other hand, affines comprise only about 25 per cent (i.e., 14 cases) of the wage-earners, 41 natal or adopted members being employed.

582 3. Rules of Marriage

"In former times, young people had to marry members of their own kin-group, lest they commit incest

567 much lower status than the war captive (ulun tangkap or ulun berani) who
426 might be redeemed and adopted, whereas the debt slave could not.

789 The bearer of the evil eye is recognzied because everything he
558 attempts or touches turns out badly. For example, if he simply says of a neighbor's farm, "That's a nice stand of rice" (Manah endar padi nuan), the crop will wither in the husk. He can hex (tau' tepang) for he is hexed!

582 Further, because of each kin-group's individual history, it has
784 numerous proscriptions, (pantang) which are peculiar to it: avoidance of
612 macaque (kera'), python (sawa'), mynah (tiong), and so on. Marriage within the kaban insures that the partners will not come into conflict because of different taboos but will share the same ones (sama pantang).

582 However, while marriage within the bilateral kindred is preferred
162 by the Iban for the reasons already discussed, in actual practice marriage generally is with a person who is not of one's kindred. Thus, of 31 marriages in Rumah Nyala, Aup, only seven were between members of the same kin-group (diri' sakaban), as indicated in Table 25.

TABLE 25

Marriage within Kindred Rumah Nyala

| Relationship of Spouses | Uncle Niece | First Cousins | Second Cousins | Third Cousins | Fourth Cousins | Not Kaban |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Incidence | 2 | 1 | 2 | | 2 | 24 |
| Percentage | 7 | 3 | 7 | | 7 | 76 |

584 will talk for the first two visits, the man not wanting to press his case too strongly, the girl not wanting to give herself too freely. But, if nothing comes of his visits by the third night, the suitor knows that he has been rejected. If, on the other hand, he is accepted, he either will ask his parents to contact the girl's parents to discover their feelings, or he will take up residence in the girl's bilik, presenting both sets of parents thereby with fait accompli.

584 In Rumah Nyala, seventeen of the 31 marriages were the result of 162 ngayap and the man's taking up residence in his wife's bilik. In 13 of the 31 cases, the man's parents or other relatives contacted the parents or relatives of the girl and made arrangements for the marriage.

TABLE 27

Mode of Marriage Rumah Nyala

| | Parental Arrangement | Initiated by Man, Arranged with Parents | Arranged Only by Couple |
|---|---|---|---|
| Incidence | 1 | 13 | 17 |
| Percentage | 3% | 42% | 55% |

584 In addition to the single marriage contracted through parental arrangement in Rumah Nyala, I am aware of less than a dozen other such marriages among the Iban whom I know. The marriage of Leonard Linggi, son of Tan Sri Dato Temenggong Jugah anak Barieng, to the daughter of Pengarah Banyan, was arranged by the parents but with the agreement of the couple. [662] It is representative of a form of dynastic marriage through which the children of powerful leaders symbolically unite the kin-groups, and

621 contemporary society. To others, and still the majority of Ibans, the
342 longhouse system is the jalai pengidup ("way of life") that is most mean-
198 ingful culturally. The longhouse still is an important center for social
183 events and many persons stated their preference for the crowd and sounds of the longhouse rather than for the loneliness and silence of a separate house. [796] Further, the longhouse is a ceremonial center for the various gawai, to which even the newly emerging urban elite, among them some college graduates, [476] return and take part. The mutual aid provided for the events of moment in the life-cycle of the individual has been adduced as another reason for the continuing popularity of the longhouse. And finally, the longhouse continues to provide an aura of security, in reality little, during the present period of terrorist activities.

Thus, the number of people who have left the longhouse community and built individual dwellings in rural areas is still relatively small and dependent upon those factors discussed as well as idio-syncratic reasons.

H. Urban Residence

The movement of an estimated 3,000 Ibans into the Sibu Urban area
369 has resulted in their dispersion throughout the town and in several patterns
177 of residence. These patterns of residence are related to a number of factors
361 including the presence or absence of kinsmen, length of time and purpose for
[162] coming to the town, position and income and whether quarters are furnished by the employer.

195 Sarawak in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Iban population increase occurred in part by natural increase and in part through the assimilation of captured members of other ethnic groups. The Melanaus, Rajangs and other former occupants of the Rajang valley were driven out, so that today, the Iban occupy what are to them the more desirable territories, and have greater access to towns and markets.

198 441 Within the past ten years, Iban traders have begun to insinuate themselves into spheres of business which previously had been the domain of the Chinese and, to a much lesser extent, the Malays. Whereas two years ago the Iban market was a joking matter among Chinese hawkers, today it is 162 the scene of a great volume of trade. And while the Iban population of [369] Sibu still tends to be a floating one, with individuals coming in to transact business in Government offices, to sell produce, or for treatment at the hospital, the number of Ibans taking up permanent residence is rapidly increasing. In the words of one man who returned to Sibu after two-years' absence,

> "Man, this isn't a Chinese town any longer. It's half Iban!"

665 177 In politics, Iban leaders such as Tan Sri Temenggong Jugah, Thomas Kana, Sidi Munan and Stephen Kalong Ningkan have been prominent in the formation and development of the more indigenous-dominated parties. Unfortunately, in more than a single instance, the strength of individual leaders, the conflict of "big-man" competition, and the lack of a tradition of unity built upon superordinate-subordinate relationships, has proved the undoing of group interests.

Within the past decade the Iban population in the Sibu pasar and its environs[1] has increased almost ten times. From a resident Iban population in the Sibu Urban area of 693 in 1960, the population has increased to more than 5,000 Iban residents (including the Field Force and their families) at the present time.[2] Whereas the Iban residents formed just over two per cent of the urban population in 1960, today they comprise a little more than eight per cent.[3]

There is little reason to anticipate a decline in the in-migration of Ibans to Sibu, whether on a temporary or more permanent basis. Rather, given the generally poor soil conditions that exist in many areas; the unpredictable climate with unseasonable flooding as in August, 1971; the firm belief of the indigenous population that double-cropping of padi will not work;[4] the problems of hunger in many upriver areas and the

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[1] Although administrators decline to include the Lanang Road Field Force in their consideration of the Iban population of Sibu, the exposure to and effects of the urban center as a type of adaptation upon members of the Field Force and their families are incontrovertible. A similar situation obtained from the Sarawak Rangers and their families before their move to the new camp at Oya Road which in itself is becoming a new pasar.

[2] A principal difficulty encountered in carrying out this study of the Sibu Urban area was the lack of census data. Because of the greater importance attached to political affairs in Western Malaysia, according to a senior official in Kuala Lumpur, the census data for those states have been processed first, and after the completion of that work the data for Sarawak will be processed.

[3] We have mentioned the movement of one entire longhouse community from Sungai Jih to Sibu following a terrorist attack on their home. Other groups and individuals have added substantially to the Iban population in Sibu.

[4] That double- and triple-cropping will work if carried out as a community activity has been demonstrated by agriculturalists.

000 We now shall consider the Ibans who for various reasons have moved into Sibu where they have taken up their residences.

C. Residents

162 A majority of the 200 Ibans in our sample have come into the
167 town from the Third Division. Twenty-nine came from the First and Second Divisions, two from the Fourth and one from the Fifth Division. Of the 168 persons from the Third Division, 81 or almost one-half came from the Sibu Rural area, and the other 87 from the other districts of this Division

167 The predominance of Ibans from the Sibu Rural area may be attributed
177 in large measure to the much longer and closer contacts, they have had with
464 the pasar. Living closer to the town, they have become job-wise and employment seekers and their relative proximity to the pasar has provided them with greater access to information about openings. As one young Iban man commented,

[829]

> "Whenever there is even a hint of some vacancy, Ibans swarm around the office like flies around sugar. By the time people from farther away hear about the opening, we already have it."

Further, the positions that have been obtained give the employees a chance to help secure placement for their kinsmen and friends. For

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[15] The persons from other districts in the Third Division include six from Sarikei, 21 from Binatang, 23 from Kanowit, 13 from Song, 20 from Kapit, and four from Mukah. I am aware that persons from other districts as well reside in Sibu, but they were not encountered in this sample.